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ABSTRACT

All schools need a variety of size, shape, type, and texture in their grounds to provide an opportunity for play, study, and shelter. This booklet provides 13 case studies of English sites illustrating some of the most imaginative work taking place in school grounds, and outlines action plans for changing grounds. Photographs and design drawings of grounds accompany each case study. Also provided are a pull-out chart outlining the grounds design action plan and information about the Learning Through Landscape Trust. (GR)

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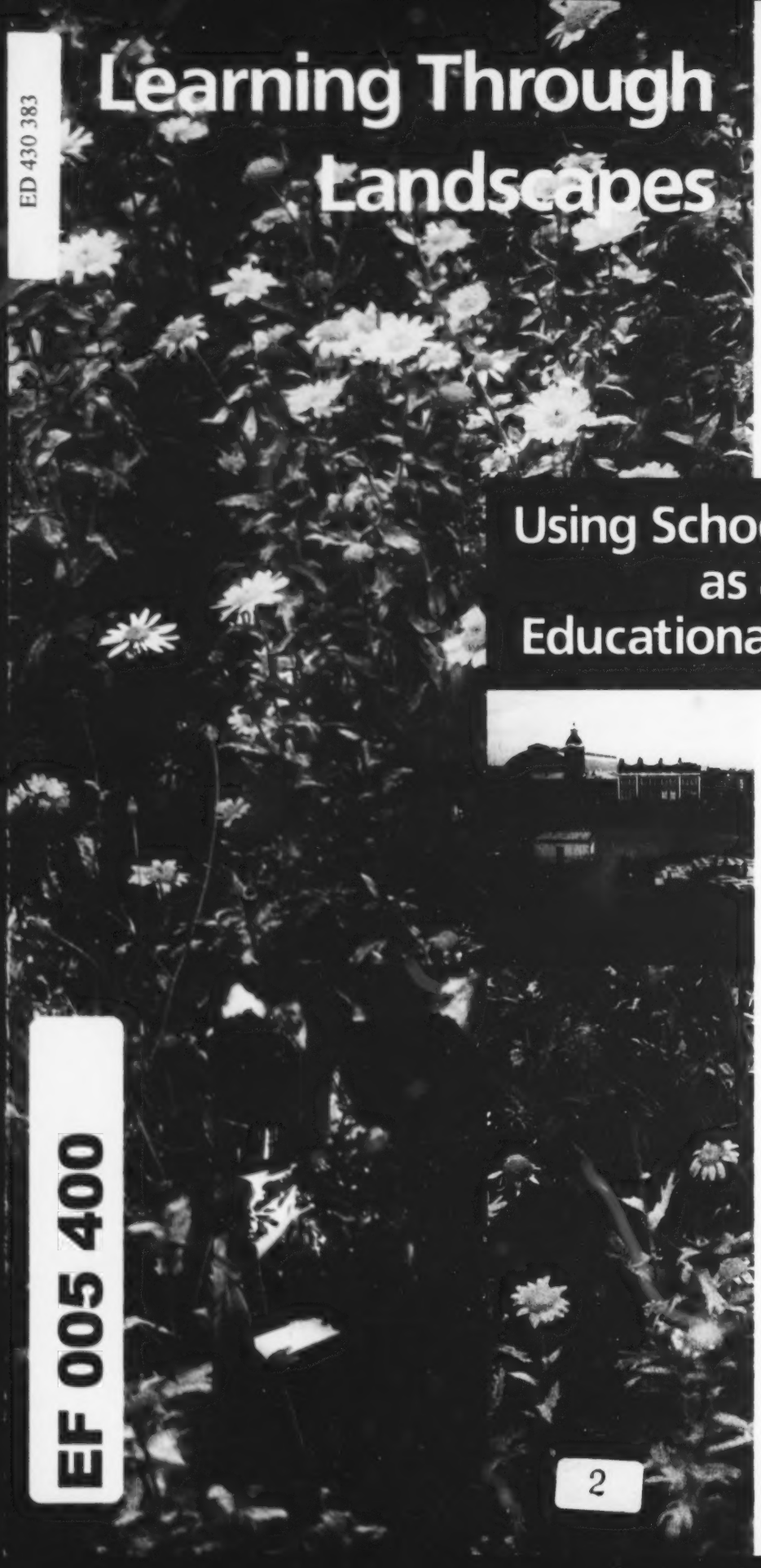
Learning Through Landscapes

Using School Grounds as an Educational Resource



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Learning Through Landscapes Trust

Learning Through Landscapes

Using school grounds as an educational resource

Kirsty Young

Learning Through Landscapes Trust

This booklet has been written and compiled by Kirsty Young of the Learning Through Landscapes Trust. The material is drawn from the three year research phase of the project, undertaken by:

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FOREWORD

In 1986 a group of like-minded people, concerned about the under-used and impoverished landscape surrounding the nation's schools, founded the Learning Through Landscapes project. The original consortium of three local authorities and the Department of Education and Science commissioned a three year project to research the design, use and management of school grounds as an educational resource. Nine other authorities joined over the next year with the Countryside Commission matching their sponsorship.

As a direct result of this research project, the Learning Through Landscapes Trust has been formed. In the years to come it will aim to stimulate improvements to the educational use of school landscapes, encouraging good practice, sharing information and providing advice.

The research team travelled the country, seeking examples of good practice in the imaginative and creative use of the school environment. This booklet is a celebration of the excellent work they found. In schools around the country, hard-working and dedicated groups had transformed their school grounds from little-used expanses of tarmac and mown grass to invaluable teaching resources, a delight to children and teachers alike. In some cases, outside agencies had added invaluable help and expertise, in others the education authority or planning department had provided every means of assistance possible.

No-one pretends that improvements are achieved easily, or overnight. The Trust hopes that these examples will inspire schools to look at their grounds and to consider how they serve all those who use them.

We believe that the quality of school grounds, their design and imaginative development, is central to the happy experience of school education. We hope schools will start to look at their own grounds and, whatever their condition or situation, see possibilities for improvements.

Curriculum development and the development of the grounds must go hand in hand. We want to raise the profile of cross-curricular environmental education in schools. There are rich resources lying on the doorsteps of so many schools, in many cases very much under-used.

All schools need a variety of size, shape, type and texture in their grounds. Varied landscape provides the opportunity for play, study and shelter and will instil a sense of belonging and pride. We know that the more care that is taken over the landscape of the nation's schools, the more likely it is that children will mature into adults with an active concern for their environment and for one another.

This booklet is divided into two sections:

1 Case studies of sites that illustrate some of the most imaginative work taking place in school grounds

2 An outline action plan for changing grounds

Bill Lucas

Bill Lucas: Trust Director

COOMBES COUNTY INFANT SCHOOL
Berkshire

If any school epitomises the aims of Learning Through Landscapes, it must be Coombes. Since the school was built eighteen years ago, an immense variety of environments have been established, using every available inch of space.

The policy of Coombes is summed up by the head teacher: "We see the outside of the school as a wealthy resource which can be drawn upon if we are prepared to plan its development. We wanted the outside environment to reflect the same degree of care and imagination which was given to other areas of the school. Children spend a large proportion of the day outside and we believe that using the grounds as a resource for a variety of learning experiences is a vital part of the life of the school".

Use of the grounds is a fundamental part of the curriculum, based around both established features and objects brought into the grounds.

Projects in the grounds follow the cycle of the seasons, with festivals, special days, activities such as planting, picnicing and harvesting and dramatic events. Other events centre around visitors to the grounds: the local ambulance crew, a tree felling team, or a traveller and his horse. The photographs show a sample of the events that make Coombes such a vibrant and lively school.

A parachute is used in the study of air

The school sheep are studied throughout the year

Fire, one of the four elements studied throughout the school year

Growing sunflowers is an important annual project: later the seeds will be harvested and eaten on a 'teddy bear's picnic'

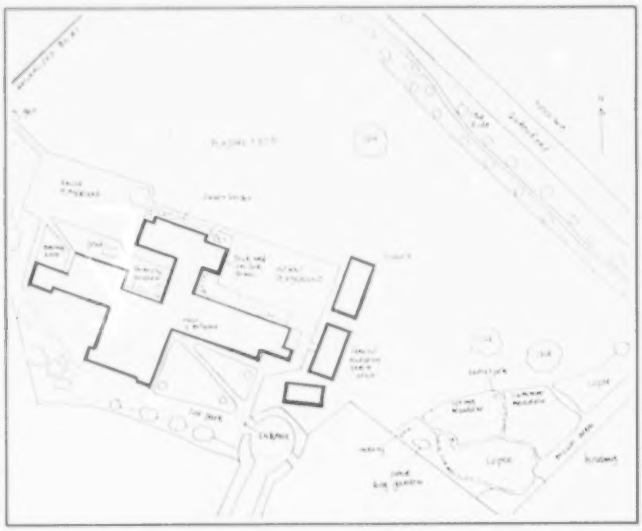
The overwhelming impression gained by any visitor to Coombes is the sense of excitement at what is happening that day, the sense of pride in the site, and the knowledge that this group of children will have a respect for and understanding of their environment for life.

MOLEHILL COPSE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Kent

Molehill Copse Primary School was built in the 1950s and lies in a cul-de-sac in outer Maidstone. From an originally uncompromising site, a wealth of features has been established through the enthusiasm of the head teacher and staff. Most encouraging of all, the county maintenance team helped at every stage of the planning and development in order to understand the project fully.

Just as at Coombes, the grounds develop and grow year by year. The original strip of mature trees down one side of the generous playing field, "The Ride", has been planted with native shrubs and plants to replace trees lost in storms. Fifty year diaries are kept on five Sapporo Golden Elms – the children find it fascinating to think their grandchildren might fill in the last pages of a diary they have begun! Wild flowers grown from seed and native woodland plants planted by the children, flourish in 'The Ride.'

The copse was planted in a corner of the playing fields, with the maintenance regime for the site altered to protect and enhance the new feature.



Each class has its own growing area near the classroom; producing anything from vegetables to teasels! A butterfly garden is sited under the headteacher's window – a welcome change from the traditional rose beds – with a hexagonal path designed as part of maths work leading to it from the playground. Ceanothus and jasmine cover ugly walls, and pyracantha is encouraged to grow and cover bird boxes, which are easily viewed from classroom windows. Another corner of the building has been measured by children and then fenced as a safe small animal area. Ducks, chickens and sheep can then be easily brought into the grounds.

A pond which suffered liner damage has been successfully converted into a bog area – constructive use of adversity! A second pond with a boardwalk is sited nearer the school buildings.

The school has established its own tree nursery, and hopes to pass on young trees to other schools grown from seeds collected in Moleshill's own grounds.

Special cards have been made using real leaves and flowers pressed and covered as identification guides – far more effective than text books! Wild flower meadows have been established using seeds collected from Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the area. Data is collected and added to a computer database, now in its third year.

A large mound covers pipes and 'hibernation holes' – one infant class was delighted when the resident fox ran under their window one morning.

At every stage of development, children are involved in observing, planning, measuring, recording and analysing. Molehill Copse is another fine example of how dedication, planning and sheer hard work can transform a site.

CRAWLEY RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Surrey

Crawley Ridge Middle School lies off a tree-lined suburban street behind a high hedge. The school was built in the 1970s on the site of a Victorian house retaining all the landscape features including a terrace, lawns, shrubberies and mature trees. From the classrooms, the children look down a long, narrow hill of tree-lined grass areas to the playing fields beyond.

These impressive grounds are used constantly as part of the curriculum in the school. Every opportunity for cross-curricular work is taken through a thematic approach to planning. Rigorous analysis ensures an adherence to the requirements of the National Curriculum. In addition, each year group has responsibility for an area of the site.

The view from the back of the school over its grounds

The school policy is explained by the head teacher:

"My observations of the success of such learning situations and children's reactions to them were initially based on the awareness that motivation increased, that children's work was always of a higher standard after such experience and that there was a change of relationship between staff and pupils which resulted in changed attitudes by the children to school and its tasks ... learning takes place when observation is sustained and the nature of the task is suited to the needs of the child. It is in the struggle to achieve the task that perception and learning take place."

All pupils are involved in a four year development plan of environmental studies, which includes visits to other sites and abroad. Projects in the grounds include studies of birds, pond life and plant growth. The special features of the site have become the focus for work. For example, a study of the problems of site drainage lead to visits from the local council and explanations of drainage techniques. The pupils then experimented with their own solutions to the problem.

One study area opposite a science classroom is devoted to experiments and 'mucky work', as there is access to sinks and a water tap.

Experimental plots of various types lie up the bank that forms a backdrop to this area. A concrete path and retaining wall allow for observation or practical involvement.

Work is presented in a variety of forms suited to the intended audience. Artwork is of a particularly high standard, and each child is allowed to refine and improve original work as far as he or she is able. Presentations of work are given to other pupils, who take notes to help with their own writeup. Samples and information sheets are created by the pupils for their fellow pupils, along with specimens and samples where appropriate.

Although the emphasis tends to be on integrated work, the programmes of study in individual subject areas are fulfilled, whilst promoting the ideas of

sharing experiences, questioning and decision-making.

A D-shaped pond has been constructed to allow maximum access, with one side made from concrete slabs for pond dipping, the other left as a natural bank to allow insects and animal access to the water. The natural shrubbery around the pond has been left intact.

The caretaker, plus a painter who came to decorate the school one summer and got caught up in the excitement, set up a video camera to record fox and badger visits during the night. A complete set of pictures covering one summer have been recorded, and the children watch the videos to see the activity taking place in their grounds long after they are in bed!

The children have a great respect for the site, and observe and understand the reasons behind simple safety rules such as "no tree climbing".

Crawley Ridge Middle School is blessed with a very unusual and rich site, and impressive use has been made of it by the headteacher and staff.

EDWALTON PRIMARY SCHOOL
Nottingham

Edwalton Primary School is bounded by housing, a road and fields which may be used for housing development in the future.

In the early 1970s the school had the foresight to gain access to an adjoining 1.6 hectare wood, owned by the local council, but maintained by the school. Staff, pupils and parents cleared the site of accumulated rubbish, created clearings and marked trails.

As Edwalton was originally a Saxon development, a Saxon site was created in the wood, where the pupils camp out overnight to trap moths and rodents to estimate populations; to study astronomy and observe the sights and sounds of the dawn chorus both natural and man-made. A stockade, hall and animal house have been constructed, and a grand feast for 300 parents was held one evening.

Maintenance of the wood has become a major project, and when the ravages of

Dutch Elm disease affected much of the woodland area, charts were made showing the spread of the disease as part of a project on understanding tree diseases. When 80 trees had to be felled, the local council put out for tenders, and was quoted £800. The children soon realised, through discussion, that the contractors were getting a good deal as they were also allowed to keep the residual wood. How much was that worth? Calculators were pressed into service, resulting in some excellent maths and a recontracted job.

Not content with such a diversity of projects, the school is continually trying to develop its facilities by setting up a farm unit run by children and parents, and improving the play facilities with an adventure playground designed by the children, drawing on a survey of their likes and dislikes. This is part of the school's emphasis on Personal and Social Education.

Edwalton Primary School is an example of how a school can extend its site beyond its boundaries by acquiring access to new sites. On a smaller scale, schools can 'adopt' an allotment or derelict piece of land.

CRANBORNE ANCIENT TECHNOLOGY SITE
Cranborne Middle School, Dorset

Cranborne Middle School is similar to Edwalton, except that here the enthusiasm of one teacher was for Iron Age technology. With the help of children and parents from throughout Dorset, Jake Kean has constructed an Iron Age roundhouse in the grounds of of Cranborne School. The technology used is, as far as possible, authentic, with the house constructed by pupils using materials available from their immediate environment at Cranborne. There are many requests from parents and local people to stay in the roundhouse overnight.

Unfinished roundhouse, summer 1987

Visiting groups, ranging from infants and juniors to GCSE and research students participate in a variety of practical activities derived from archaeological and historical evidence. Working with fire, clay, shale, flint, timber and reed, children are able to build structures, make tools and utensils and explore the domestic and agricultural techniques of our ancestors.

In one year the whole of the first roundhouse was built: children coppiced timber, dug the surrounding ditch and bank, constructed the wattle wall, applied daub, erected the rafters and thatched the roof. The project revealed the resourcefulness and capability of many children whose talents had previously been untapped. In the summer of 1986, the LEA granted half Jake s time to serve visiting groups for the spring and summer terms. In October 1986, however, the building was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt on a bigger scale over the next eighteen months.

What began as a school project has gradually been adopted by the LEA in Dorset as its seventh Outdoor Centre. Activities are adjusted to suit the age and interests of the visiting groups.

Younger children discover how materials from the local environment were used to make tools and shelters, and provide clothing and utensils. Making fire, cooking, fashioning and firing pottery lead on to work with metal and a closer study of the archaeological evidence by older pupils.

Currently a ten metre log boat is being constructed from half an oak tree. This will be launched in October close to where the original, dating from 300 BC, was dredged up in Poole Harbour in 1964.

Trampling the daub

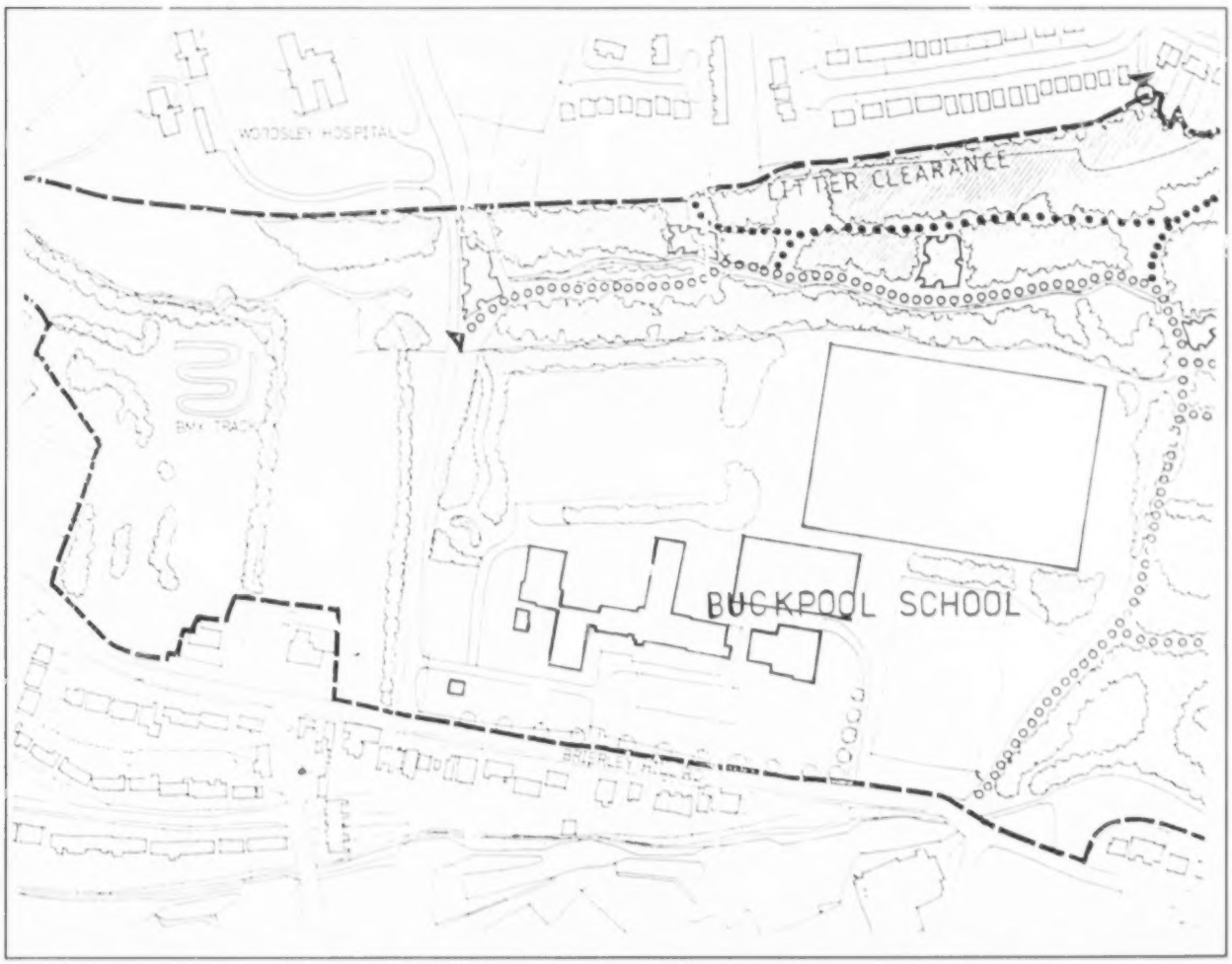
BUCKPOOL COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
Dudley, West Midlands

This is another example of a school 'adopting' a local site or environment.

As part of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's initiative, a 19.3 kilometre walkway or 'Green Wedge' was created running from Wordsley to the edge of Wolverhampton. Old colliery works and mine shafts dotted one area, with streams, canal and pools present along the walkway. With Leisure Services, Planning and Education departments and MSC labour, the area has been reclaimed and transformed. This public resource includes canal-side moorings, an industrial park and open space including sports pitches.

Buckpool School has been responsible for creating, mapping and maintaining a nature trail through one part of the Wedge, overlapping into its school grounds. This trail is a focus for environmental work for a group of local schools. The Green Wedge Nature Trail Week gave nineteen schools the opportunity to work in the area on pollution monitoring, derelict land reclamation and canal restoration. A field study centre will open in September with two full-time wardens and an environmental education team that currently numbers three. Although based in the Planning Department the team will have joint use of the field centre to support the hundreds of visitors who are now using the Green Wedge.

An industrial partnership between the school and a local firm has adopted an 800 yard stretch of canal, which is used extensively for cross-curricular studies. Hence industry is directly funding curricular activities through the sponsorship.



BASSETT GREEN FIRST SCHOOL
Hampshire

Bassett Green School stands in an urban location, surrounded by a pre-war housing estate. Wooden-faced buildings, built in 1933 as a temporary measure before the building of the brick Middle School adjacent, surround a tarmac courtyard, with a hedge boundary and a small grassed area with a tree.

It is the school's policy:

"to encourage an awareness of the environment; to develop a level of curiosity regarding it and to build up a store of information about it".

The site is small, but beautifully used. The main project, the Thistle Patch, was initiated when a temporary classroom was removed, leaving a bare patch of ground at the side of the main buildings.

The plot is only about 9m in length, but a great deal has been packed into an initially unpromising-looking area.

Children having easy access to planting beds direct from the classroom

A compost heap provides a home for hedgehogs and other wildlife, whilst the pond teems with tadpoles and young frogs.

The chequerboard garden has a variety of scented and textured plants, plus a sundial. Children study the Thistle Patch throughout the seasons, using a carefully-planned structure of exercises to maximise what they can achieve individually.

All data is recorded on simple computer databases. The head teacher notes how children with special educational needs find the motivation they require to start work through using these bases.

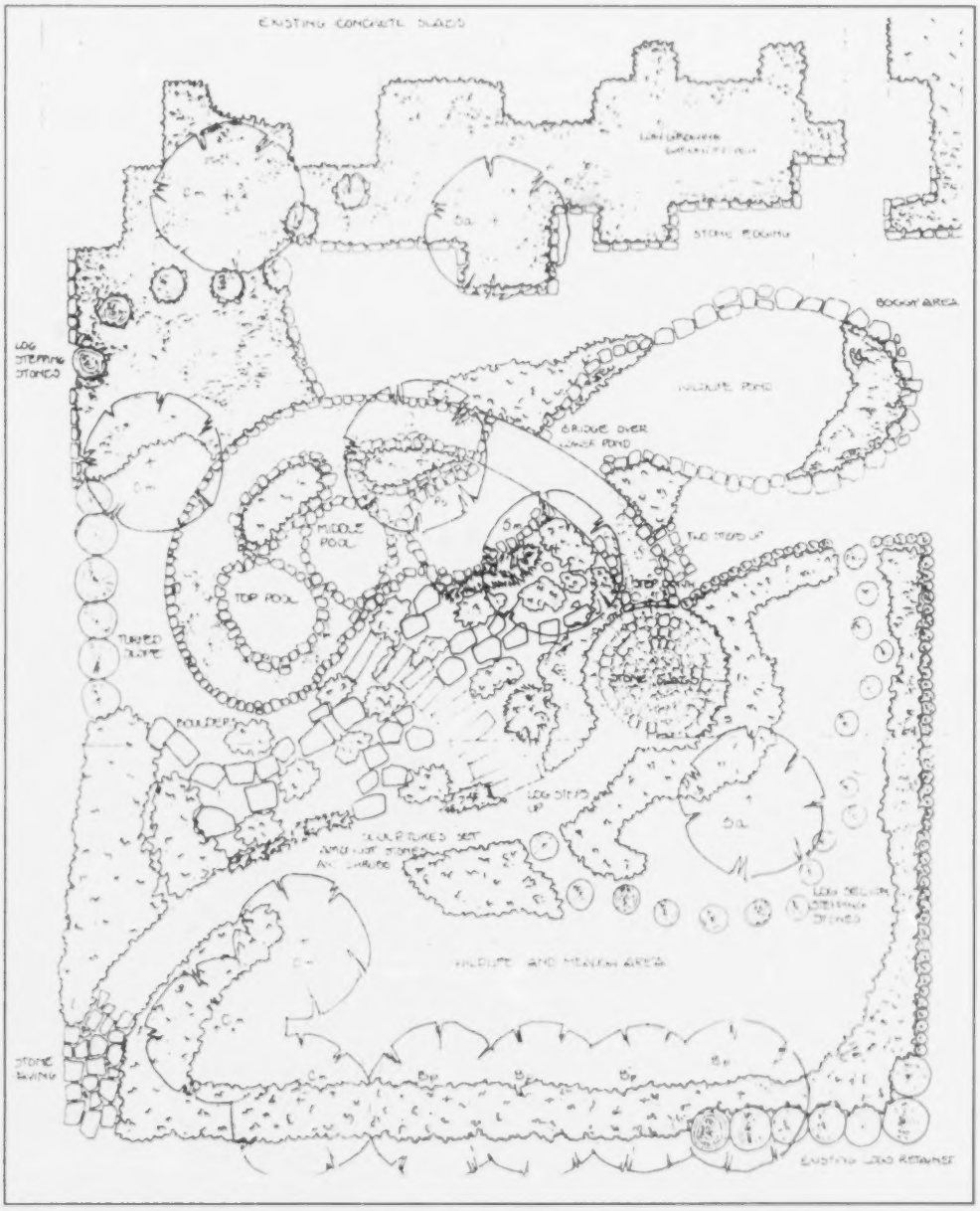
Litter is a problem, with the hedge boundary described as 'a nesting site for tins!'. Litter collection and care of the site is part of the routine for the children. Each year-group has responsibility for the care and maintenance of various areas of the Thistle Patch and other features, such as the tubs and the allotment.

The tubs lie in every corner of the site, with direct access from the classrooms. Children can just step from their classroom into the courtyard and work on the raised beds. A dinner lady now helps children work on the site during lunchtimes. The whole ambience of 'playtime' has changed from a lack of interest in anything to a positive interest in everything!

The Thistle Patch

GLAN ELY SCHOOL
South Glamorgan

Glan Ely Comprehensive has worked on the development of an inner courtyard area for over ten years. Initially begun by the art department, the area has been landscaped by linking design studies and practical nature conservation. Here, a plant's colour, texture and positioning was carefully considered, so that the whole aesthetic quality of the courtyard has been planned. The plan shows the range of the vision, with three ponds as well as meadow areas, a boggy area and logs to step over the meadow to avoid disturbance. The crowning glory of the site is the flamingo sculpture designed by the children using research through zoo visits, working drawings, cutting and welding the steel rods and installing the sculpture in the garden.



PILGRIM PRIMARY SCHOOL
Plymouth, Devon

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT

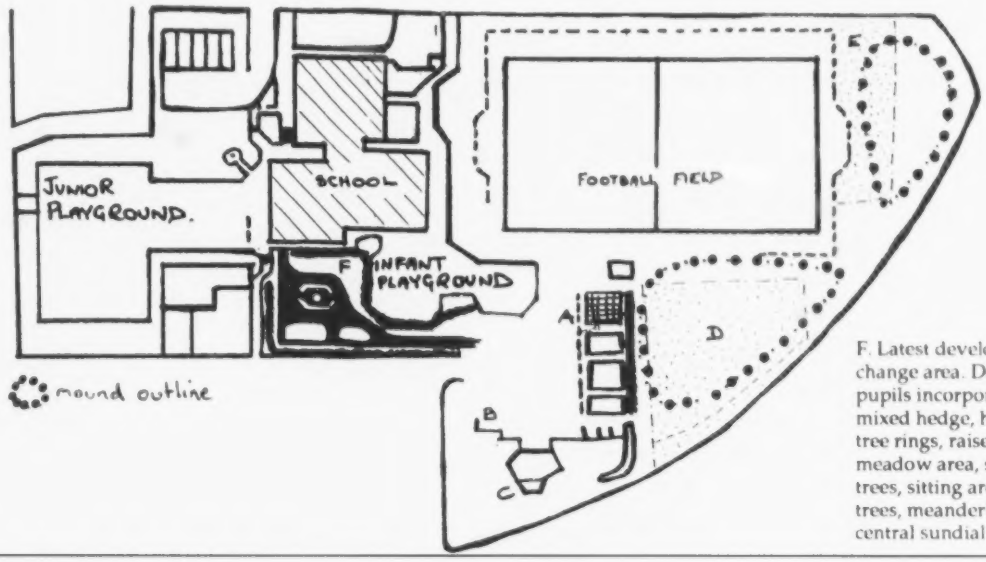
A. Practical growing areas for infants and juniors

B. Wall trails, geological rockery, practical maths area.

C. Wild area, diverse habitats, conservation area.

D. Native trees, mixed canopy

E. Introduced trees grouped by species



F. Latest development change area. Designed by pupils incorportating: mixed hedge, herb garden, tree rings, raised beds, meadow area, standard trees, sitting area, apple trees, meandering paths, central sundial.

Pilgrim Primary School is a new school built in the early 1980s on the site of a former school. Enterprising use was made of earth and rubble from the building works to create two mounds in the grounds. These serve a dual purpose as study habitats and screening for the busy dual carriageway that makes up much of the southern and western school boundaries.

Since the first pupils moved in, there has been a computer record of all the different habitats created in the grounds.

Perhaps the most striking feature is the pond. Study walls made from different materials form a walk around the pond area and are flanked by a geological rockery made from a wide variety of natural and man-made materials. The study walls are used to compare texture, hardness and softness, variety and colour, as well as geological origin. The clever use of a small area makes the idea of a wall ideal for those with limited space.

Bushes with berries have been planted to attract birds, as well as allowing weeds and grass to go to seed.

Young native trees have been planted as a fenced copse and two stiles added to give access.

Four mini-beast habitats of sacking, polythene, wood and corrugated iron give varying ranges of damp and dark and support many different species, as does a rotting wood pile.

There are also garden plots for fruit growing, and a large compost heap "fed" by the children, the caretaker and the local Sainsburys' waste vegetables. Rabbits are kept, and there is an active anti-litter campaign with a litter patrol.

The pond and walls

Use this pull-out action plan to help you develop your school site. Pin it on a notice board, or copy it as part of your own action plan.

LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPES TRUST

Third Floor,
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Victoria Road
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Tel: (0962) 846258

LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPES

STAGE 1 THINKING

- IMAGE
- SCALE
- SPACE
- SHELTER

STAGE 2 SURVEYING

MAP YOUR SITE
- OBTAIN A SITE PLAN
- PUPIL SURVEY & PLAN
- SCALE MODEL OF SITE
- OBSERVE & RECORD USES OF SITE

VIEWS ON THE SITE
- QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
  - PUPILS
  - STAFF
  - MAINTENANCE ORGANISATION
  - PARENTS
  - NEIGHBOURS

PRACTICAL NEEDS
- LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SITE SAFETY
- MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS (MINIMUM)

STAGE 3 PLANNING CHANGES

SITE SURVEY ANALYSIS
- COMPREHENSIVE SITE OVERVIEW

IDEAS
- CONSULT
  - PUPILS
  - STAFF
  - PARENTS
  - EXPERTS – GROUPS AND AUTHORITY, ETC

3 PLANS FOR ACTION
- MONEY NO OBJECT
- IDEAL WORLD
- ESSENTIALS ONLY

STAGE 4 CONSULTATION

TELL PEOPLE
- AUTHORITY
- PARENTS
- NEIGHBOURS

PERMISSION
- OUTLINE APPROVAL FROM AUTHORITY
- OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES INFORMED AND AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

STAGE 5 COSTINGS

PLANS TO AUTHORITY

SELLING THE IDEA
- BROCHURE
- SPONSORSHIP
- HELP IN KIND

MASTER PLAN
- COMPOSITE OF ALL IDEAS INCLUDING
  - TIMETABLE
  - PLANS
  - COSTINGS

PRESENTATIONS
- to:
  - PARENTS
  - LOCAL GROUPS
  - PARENTS
  - STAFF
  - LOCAL AUTHORITY

STAGE 6 DOING IT!

PRACTICAL HELP
- ORGANISED DIG/PLANT/WHATEVER DAY
- TENDERS TO CONTRACTORS/ CONTRACT OF WORK AS REQUIRED
- ORDERING AND TIMEFLOW OF SUPPLIES
- REGULAR CHECKS ON PROGRESS/BUDGET
- ASSIMULATION OF NEW RESOURCE INTO THE CURRICULUM
- PUBLICITY

ACTION PLAN FOR CHANGE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPES TRUST

AIMS OF THE TRUST

The Trust aims to stimulate improvements to the environmental quality and the educational use of school landscapes. These include:

- promoting the imaginative development of all environments in which learning takes place
- developing a variety of landscapes designed specifically to relate to the curriculum needs of schools
- helping teachers to promote environmental education as part of the National Curriculum
- encouraging the achievement of attainment targets in the National Curriculum through use of the external environment
- enhancing the image of schools with the surrounding community
- creating an appropriate scale of space within which children can play and grow up
- developing landscapes that offer children the facility for learning through experience, contact and enjoyment.
- enhancing the visual richness and design of the school environment
- encouraging efficient and responsible use of resources

Learning Through Landscapes aims to encourage good practice, share information and develop active involvement in the external environment of the nation's schools.

HOW THE TRUST CAN HELP YOUR LEA

In return for £750 per annum we can give your LEA:

- **two free copies of the Final Report**

- **information about the use of school sites including childrens' learning**
  - low-cost publications and support material showing how many of the Attainment Targets of the National Curriculum can be taught by using school sites.
  - INSET materials to promote environmental education

- **advice on how to change and improve school sites**
  - help with landscape briefs for new schools and improvements to existing sites
  - site visits
  - access to environmental awards
  - practical help including ways of financing projects
  - information and contacts from the Trust's extensive national database

- **advice on site-management**
  - how to improve site security by good design and imaginative use of the environment
  - how governors, local businesses and the local community can be involved.
  - best use of resources

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

For only £10 per annum, individual members will receive:

- a termly newsletter with information about the Trust's activities
- free activity sheets with suggestions for improving school sites and ideas for using the school grounds as a teaching resource
- low-cost publications
- membership of regional Learning Through Landscapes groups

For further details, please contact the Trust at the address overleaf, or ring (0962) 846258

Pilgrim's latest development is an informal area located between the infant and junior playgrounds. Designed by pupils, this area is used freely during lunch-times and breaks.

The school site is a thoroughfare for the local community, but the emphasis on care has helped to keep vandalism to a minimum.

Part of the geological rockery

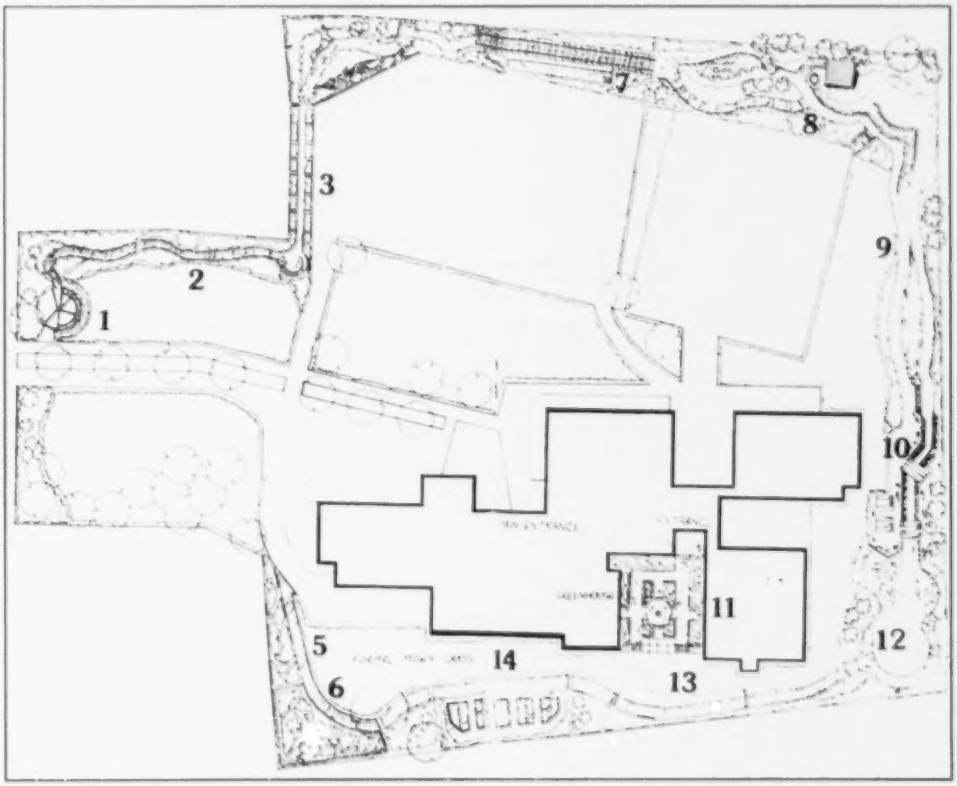
The Chequerboard garden

SELLY OAK SCHOOL
Birmingham

KEY:

1. hornbeam sheltered sitting area
2. oak-ash woodland belt
3. reserve for scented and fruiting shrubs
4. wild garden based on pioneering plants and shrubs
5. shrub bank
6. rabbit warren
7. stretch of reconstructed limestone ballasted railway track*
8. wild pond and wetland
9. ecological ditch
10. mini canal and ridge*
11. herb and vegetable garden
12. formal pond
13. bridleway to demonstrate rural crafts.
14. tree nursery

* = *not yet constructed*



Selly Oak School is a secondary school for children with learning difficulties, in a suburb of Birmingham.

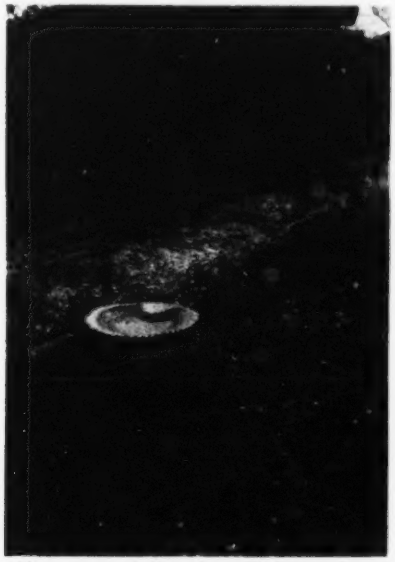
The school does not have direct access to its playing fields, which are reached by a path through a field, and hence the perimeter development is particularly important. The initiative for the development came from one teacher, supported and helped by the education authority and the planning department. An MSC scheme provided six workers over two years. Every member of the school in every department was involved, for example, the garden (11) was a composite plan from ideas submitted by every pupil.

19 19

A nature trail around the perimeter allows pupils to observe not only the nature and geological structure of the area, but also the variety of surfaces underfoot, from gravel and bark, to granite setts and railway sleepers.

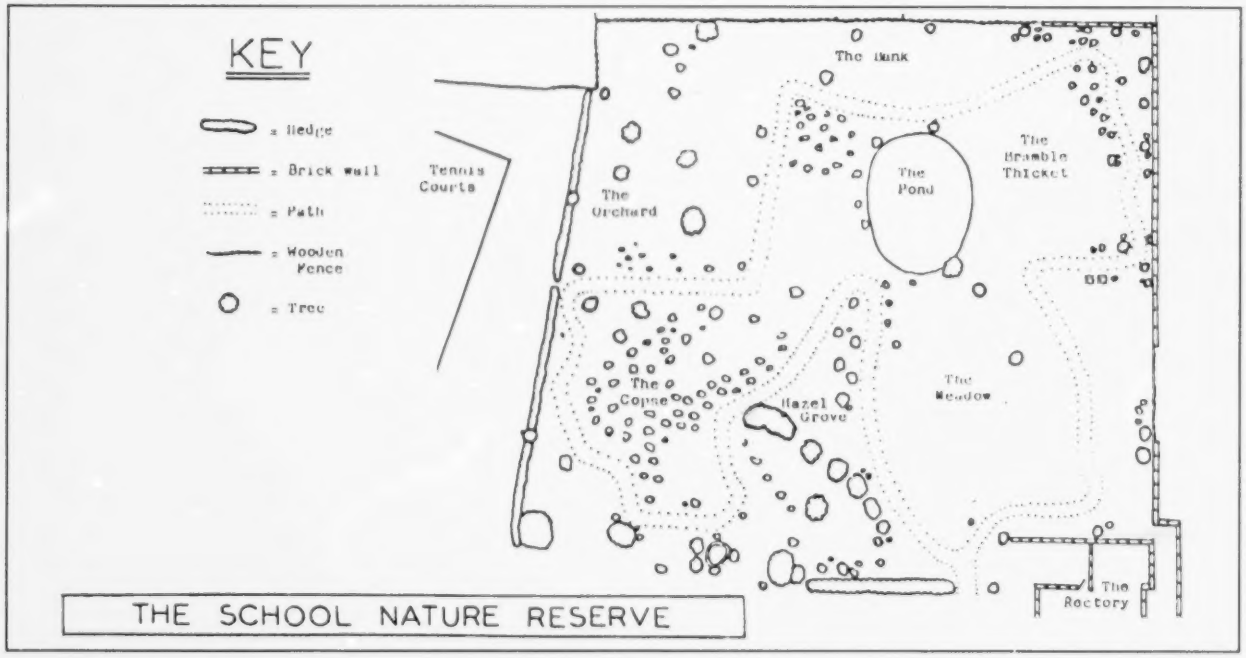
Not only has the scheme given the school an invaluable range of resources, but the staff report that the ethos of the whole school has improved, and there is a more settled and caring attitude.

Working on the formal garden



The nature trail and sundial

BARNWELL SECONDARY SCHOOL
Hertfordshire



Barnwell Secondary School incorporates an old rectory (used as a lower school block) and its garden.

Behind it lies the nature reserve, but the whole school is surrounded by a wide variety of spaces: a courtyard with a pond, a bridge and trees to one side, grassy spaces and bushes, a rural studies area and access to both woodland and the churchyard on the boundaries. As with Selly Oak, the playing fields lie beyond this perimeter area.

All departments in the school integrate the use of the grounds into the curriculum, but most impressive of all is the trust put in the pupils when using the grounds informally. The whole site is used and respected by all age groups for work and play.

The variety of space and environment available at Barnwell has both positively influenced the work of its pupils and helped the creation of a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere at the school.

Studies by the old rectory

The nature reserve pond

The courtyard pond and bridge

Spaces to play and hide

PENTON SCHOOL
London

As part of the Islington Schools Environmental Project (ISEP), Penton's enclosed tarmac expanse was changed using different levels, colour, and a magnificent tyre lizard play structure. Professional designers worked with the school and the children to change a square, tarmac area into a play area that was stimulating and visually exciting.

The view from above the playground

The tyre lizard

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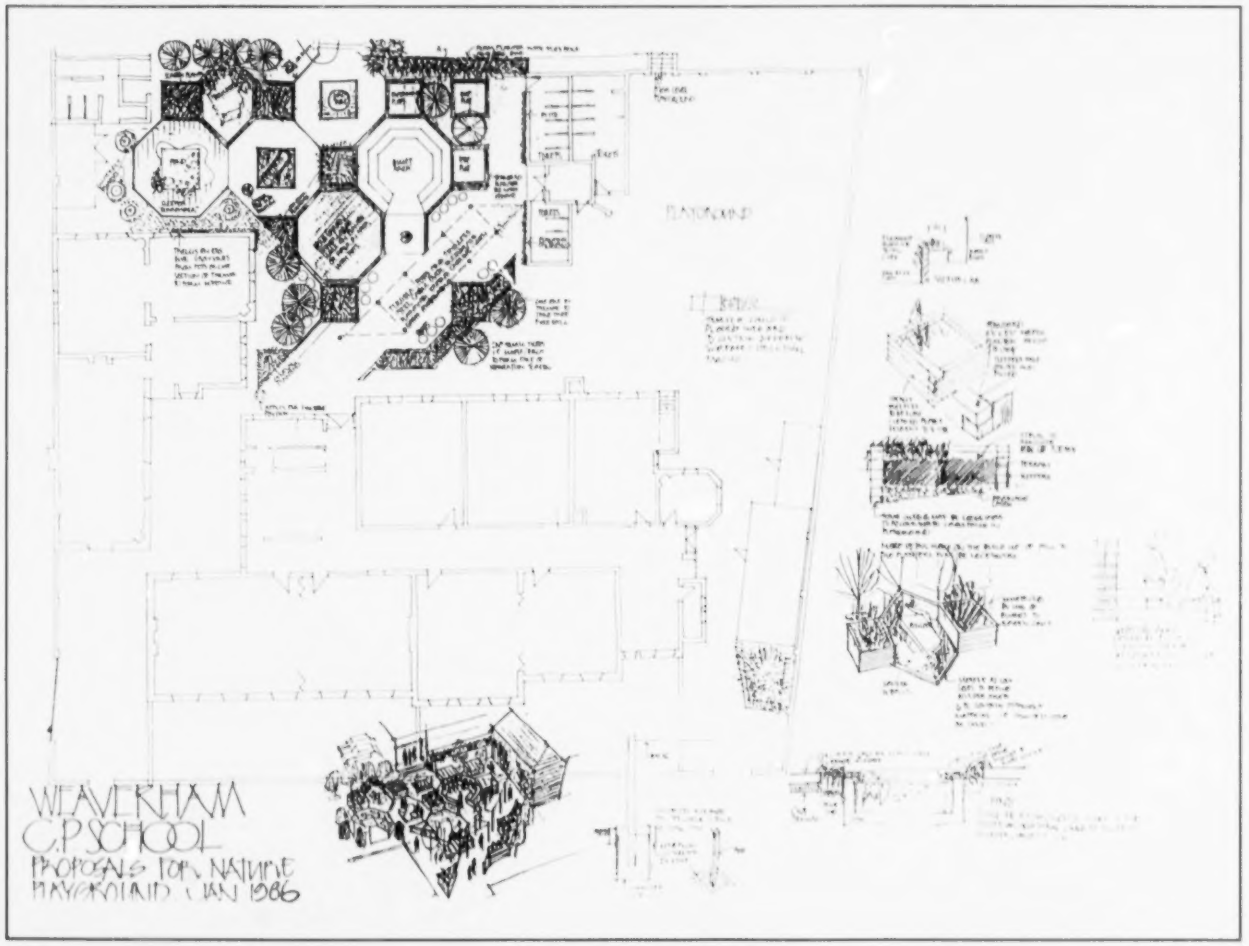
WEAVERHAM FOREST PRIMARY SCHOOL
Cheshire

Weaverham was built in the 1840s, but numerous additions to the building meant that the school site eventually had three playground areas, which contrast bleakly with the well-decorated classrooms inside. It was decided to transform one of the playgrounds into a quiet sheltered place for break times, a parent waiting area and an educational resource. Children were involved from the planning stage, but an architect parent finally designed the area incorporating the childrens' ideas where possible. The area uses old railway sleepers to form octagonal beds.

Each octagon contains a different habitat – a herb garden, a pond, rotting logs and a rockpile. Native and threatened species are

included, to encourage children to be more aware of the need for conservation and a caring attitude. The aesthetic element was also planned, to provide variation of shape and form of the plants, sufficient evergreen cover and a staggered flow of flowers, fruits and berries, foliage colour and bark colour.

The raised bed design of the area would also make it suitable for wheelchairs and disabled pupils who could work from the edge of the beds.



During the three years of research, and right up to this moment, the Trust has never ceased to be amazed by the diversity of uses of the school estate. Schools throughout the country have sent details of their projects, and many more have no doubt undertaken projects about which the Trust knows nothing. The examples in this booklet are just the beginning. Every school in the country could and should use their grounds as an educational resource. Every school can change its grounds. The schools here have all, in different ways, made the most of their estate. Why don't you join them?

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Many of the schools featured are already using their school grounds as a major resource in teaching the National Curriculum.

Environmental education has been recognised as a major cross-curricular theme in the National Curriculum. Many of the styles of teaching featured in the case studies are exactly the kind of active, investigative learning that teachers and pupils welcome.

Whether you choose to organise environmental education as a cross-curricular activity or link it to specific subjects or a combination of both, you will find rich material in your school grounds.

Use of the grounds extends beyond the curriculum into informal times for play. Children spend up to 28 per cent of their school day outside, much of it during break times. The site should provide a stimulating play environment as part of the educational resource. This can be achieved by a range of spaces featuring different scales, levels, textures and shelter for active play or sitting and talking. The rewards are evident in all our case studies; well-planned provision for play can lead to an improvement in the atmosphere at playtime, less collision accidents and a sense of belonging within the school.

FUTURE SUPPORT

Many schools, we know, have battled against great odds to change their grounds, and not just against the problems of cash. With Local Management, an exciting new set of opportunities exists for teachers to manage their grounds imaginatively. The image and resources offered by the school will be important, too, as parents exercise their right to choose.

The Trust will continue to promote the good use, design and management of school grounds as an educational resource. It will seek support from every education authority in the country and sponsorship for its activities and will offer training and advice. It will produce publications designed to help teachers look at their grounds and implement projects of change.

A network of nationwide contacts, held on the LTLT computer, can put you in touch with other schools in your area that use their school grounds. So please do keep telling us how you are progressing, or, if you are about to start work, what your plans are.

Details of how you and your authority can join us are on the inside back cover.

On the following pages there is a guide to getting started and in the centre of this booklet is a flow chart which guides you through the process of change step by step. Both sections are designed to be copied and used over and over again. Change is a dynamic process. There is no one way of doing it. These are simply some ideas to help you start. Please do let the Trust know how your plan is working, and send us some photographs!

WHY CHANGE YOUR GROUNDS?

The schools featured here gave many different reasons for wanting to change their grounds. Here are a few good reasons for change:

- to encourage an active interest in the immediate environment
- to produce grounds which can then be used in teaching the curriculum
- to reduce vandalism and litter
- to increase opportunities for play
- to make learning fun
- to involve the whole community
- to make more parents want to send their children to your school!

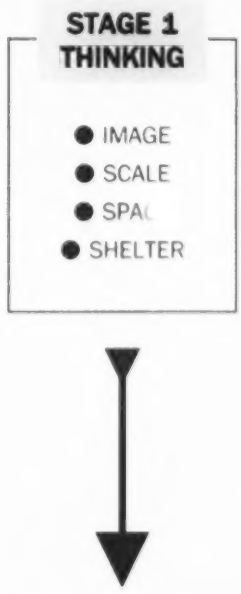
WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Anyone and everyone. This action plan is written primarily for teachers and head teachers, but all members of the school community – staff, pupils, governors and parents, should get involved.

WHERE DO WE START?

Start with the grounds as they are. Find out what the children, the school's 'customers', think about their grounds and what they like and dislike. Find out how the school estate is run, what are the special maintenance needs of the site, the unusual features, the hazards and the problem areas. Then plan for change! This is where this Action Plan Guide can help.

STAGE 1 – THINKING



What image does your school project?

Are the grounds used as a cross-curricular resource?

Do the grounds have variation in scale, space and shelter?

You may already have an idea of what area of the grounds need change, but look further! Expand your ideas, think big, and ask the children. Young people are not afraid of thinking on a large and imaginative scale.

LOOKING AT THE GROUNDS

A school site has many different demands placed upon it by all those involved in it. Any survey or study of the grounds should try to encompass all the needs and uses and is an ideal opportunity for a project involving the whole school across the curriculum and across the school age groups.

STAGE 2 – SURVEYING

STAGE 2 SURVEYING

MAP YOUR SITE

- OBTAIN A SITE PLAN
- PUPIL SURVEY & PLAN
- SCALE MODEL OF SITE
- OBSERVE & RECORD USES OF SITE

(a) Start by looking at the physical structures through mapping, measuring and surveying.

- A site plan of the school, showing all buildings, drainage, access, etc. Your local authority should have a copy if there is not one in school. It may well date from the last project affecting the school, whether it was planting, extension or the creation or conversion of the site. It will almost invariably be out of date!

- Ordinance Survey maps of the local area and parish maps often show historical features, such as the sites of old buildings, or ancient boundaries. Your county library may also have copies of old maps showing former uses of the school site.

- The childrens' own plan of the site. A site map is not easy to read; ask your authority surveyors department to visit and explain surveying techniques. The children can then measure and plot their own site maps to scale, and amend the 'official' version with additional features.

- A site usé map. In the process of constructing their own site map, children will have learnt much about the daily use of the site. Where do lorries deliver to? Is there a shortcut across the grass used by children going home? All this information can help towards a better understanding of the current uses of the school site. Both teaching and maintenance staff could add their own uses to give a more comprehensive picture.

- A scale model of the school and its grounds provides an ideal design project and a three dimensional visualisation that can be changed easily as ideas emerge. The model should include the flora and fauna of the site, access points, and perhaps an indication of the wildlife that already lives on the site!

(b) Gauge the school's feelings about the site through describing, writing, expressing and analysing.

- A site questionnaire for the children. Where is your favourite place? What is the noisiest place? Where do you go at playtimes (i) if it is sunny, (ii) if it is wet? Where do you sit? Where do you run? The results can be charted or put on a database, and the children encouraged to talk about their feelings for their surroundings. They could also examine the climatic conditions. Where is the windiest place in the school? Does one area suffer from frost? Is one area in shade longer than others?

- The same for the adults! This could be combined with a maintenance questionnaire for those who care for the site – where does litter tend to congregate? Where are the main problems of drainage, or wind damage?

VIEWS ON THE SITE
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
PUPILS
STAFF
MAINTENANCE
ORGANISATION
PARENTS
NEIGHBOURS

(c) Catalogue the day-to-day site maintenance requirements and organisation, from the view of non-teaching staff.

- A study by both pupils and staff of the essential aspects of site administration and organisation such as fire access, turning circles for trucks and gang mower widths, will give a picture of the non-educational use of the site. Perhaps a local authority official could visit to explain some of the site features as designed by the planners.

- Local Management of Schools; what does it/will it mean for your school? How will it change the present system? Who will have responsibility for maintenance? How much flexibility will your school be allowed in the maintenance of its site?

PRACTICAL NEEDS
● LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SITE SAFETY
● MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS (MINIMUM)

STAGE 3 – PLANNING CHANGES

Now you know exactly what everyone on site thinks about the school grounds. Analyse the results and find the points of correlation and disparity. Then plan for change!

STAGE 3
PLANNING CHANGES

SITE SURVEY ANALYSIS
● COMPREHENSIVE SITE OVERVIEW

- Take a holisitic view of the site. If the playground and the edge of the playing fields, for example, are both cited as problem areas, try not to choose one and try and improve just that area, but consider the problem as a whole.

- Consult experts, such as the environmental education advisor from the education authority, or local groups, such as wildlife, butterfly and bird societies. There are also various conservation groups which may be able to provide practical help.

- Consider three plans of action

  (1) As if money and time are no object – the whole site, the whole lot!

  (2) Ideal world, recognising the realities of time and money but still thinking comprehensively

  (3) Limited resources but exciting and radical projects

- Ask the children and staff what they would like to see changed and how, in each of the three contexts above, or get different classes to do different plans.

- Draw up provisional plans for the site as above.

IDEAS
- CONSULT
PUPILS
STAFF
PARENTS
EXPERTS – GROUPS AND AUTHORITY, ETC

3 PLANS FOR ACTION
- MONEY AND TIME NO OBJECT
- IDEAL WORLD
- ESSENTIALS ONLY

STAGE 4 – CONSULTATION

By now, many people within the school, including parents, will be aware that you are thinking about change. It is essential to inform the authority of the intent to change before plans are drawn, in case there are conditions that might affect any submitted plans.

STAGE 4 CONSULTATION

PERMISSION
- OUTLINE APPROVAL FROM AUTHORITY
- OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES INFORMED AND AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

GETTING PERMISSION FOR CHANGE

Each authority has a different system, but basically the Education Authority is the freeholder of any state school site. Therefore permission has to be obtained for any changes. Departmental responsibility for the maintenance and/or alteration of a site will vary, so the best idea is to begin with the education department, and go from there. Departments most often involved are the planning, architects and parks departments. If the project affects boundaries, or extends

TELL PEOPLE
- AUTHORITY
- PARENTS
- NEIGHBOURS

beyond the grounds, then any party involved, such as the local parish council, should be informed. This serves the dual purpose of keeping everybody informed and priming them for possible funding at a later date!

STAGE 5 COSTINGS

MASTER PLAN
- COMPOSITE OF ALL IDEAS INCLUDING
- TIMETABLE
- PLANS
- COSTINGS

At this stage, permission will only be granted in principle, in the absence of detailed plans. Now is the time to collate the ideas, and form a master plan. Costings should be included at this stage as far as possible, in the form of a shopping list with each item costed separately. The master plan should also include a detailed timetable of what should be done and when. A vital part of the plan will be the maintenance implications – who will look after the features both in and out of termtime.

- **Don't try to do too much, too soon.**

  Change should be planned over a span of time, say three years, to allow planting to become established, and changes on the school to be assessed. Basic earthworks and planting, if planned, should be implemented in the first year, with extra features being added over the next two years. This ensures that a range of children experience the process of change, and that the grounds take on a dynamic cycle of change and adaptation. Also, funding bodies like to see success, and one project can lead to another. Plans can therefore accommodate wide-ranging change without over-commitment in the first year.

- Present the plans, with the help of the children, to parents and governors. Explain the benefits, the work involved and the costs. Often, items on the shopping list can be ticked off by parents who can give items in kind. Retired members of the community might, for example, help with maintenance over the summer months.

PRESENTATIONS
to:
PARENTS
LOCAL GROUPS
STAFF
LOCAL AUTHORITY
OFFICERS

- Adapt the plans as required, and present them to the authority.

PLANS TO AUTHORITY

FUNDING

Funding is probably the biggest headache involved in change to the school estate. Most authorities will give a modest grant, but it is unlikely that this will cover the cost entirely.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- First of all, decide how you are going to present your project. A clear, well laid out handbill or booklet showing plans will help potential sponsors understand your plans. Your could also invite them to an informal meeting at the school, to explain your ideas and perhaps illustrate them with slides and models. Keep parents informed of the project.

SELLING THE IDEA

- BROCHURE
- SPONSORSHIP
- HELP IN KIND

- Additional funding can be sought from charitable trusts and award schemes, though the trick here is to know at what stage of the project they wish to be involved. (See Appendix 1 for some addresses, and refer to the *Directory of Grant-making Trusts* for others at your local reference library.) By writing for all their literature in advance, you may avoid "missing the boat".

- Funding in kind often comes from parents and neighbours of the school, if they are asked. A shopping list of how much each item on the master plan will cost could help local firms assess the sponsorship potential. For example, a local building firm may loan a digger for a day, or a local nursery might donate plants, whereas a request for money from the same firm may not meet with success. Any armed services stationed near the school, or local colleges, might be able to help with manpower. Learning Through Landscapes can help you at this stage. Please telephone us!

STAGE 6 – DOING IT!

Let us assume that permission has been obtained, adaptations recommended and made to the plan, the timetable finalised, finance is secure, and all systems ready to go. Now is the time to schedule the practical help. All over the country, parents have helped with "dig-in" days, planting trees, or digging ponds with their children under the supervision of county staff. Plan the day and invite all the local press, radio and television – school projects are ideal media material as they are "green" and involve young children! A local dignatory or national celebrity could be invited to lay the first stone or plant the first tree. If the start of the project is an event, then obtaining help later on becomes that much easier. Tell the Learning Through Landscapes Trust as well!

And – **good luck!**

PRACTICAL HELP

- ORGANISED DIG/PLANT/WHATEVER DAY
- TENDERS TO CONTRACTORS/CONTRACT OF WORK AS REQUIRED
- ORDERING AND TIMEFLOW OF SUPPLIES
- REGULAR CHECKS ON PROGRESS/BUDGET
- ASSIMILATION OF NEW RESOURCE INTO THE CURRICULUM
- PUBLICITY

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The **"Directory of Grant Making Trusts"** lists all registered charitable trusts, and groups them under headings which cover their areas of interest. School grounds projects can straddle these classifications, as, for example, they might be both educational and concerning the environment, a community project or a youth project. Trusts are also classified in their geographical areas, so there may be a trust specific to an area or parish rather than any specific category of interest. All reference libraries should have a copy, or contact the Charities Aid Foundation directly to purchase a copy.

A number of award schemes for environmental improvements have been established over the past few years. The rules governing entry vary from award to award: contact the addresses below for accurate information before submitting any entry.

The Colonel Saunders Environmental Award
Philippa Hogan-Hern
c/o Reginal Watts Associates
52 St Johns Street
Smithfield
London
EC1M 4DT

Shell Better Britain Campaign
Red House
Hill Lane
Great Barr
Birmingham B43 6LZ

Ford European Conservation Awards (for larger scale schemes)
The Conservation Foundation
1 Kensington Gore
London SW7 2AR

Europa Nostra Award Scheme
35 Lange Voorhout
2514 EC The Hague
The Netherlands

Trusthouse Forte Community Chest
The Conservation Foundation
1 Kensington Gore
London
SW7 2AR

Tesco/YOU magazine
Green Team Competition
Educational Project Resources
FREEPOST
London
SW7 4YY

Varta's Greenest School Competition (based on Young Green Consumer Guide)
Victor Gollancz Publishers
PO Box 53
Littlehampton
West Sussex
BN17 7EH

The *Directory of Social Change* publish a range of guides to grants for charities and for individuals' needs. Further details and a publications list from:
Directory of Social Change
Radius Works
Back Lane
London
NW3 1HL

Specialised awards

The Tree Council
(tree projects)
35 Belgrave Square
London
SW1X 8QN

Geographical Association Award
(for new material most likely to contribute to geographical education)
343 Fulwood Road
Sheffield
S10 3BP

The Princes Trust
(youth and young people)
8 Bedford Road
London
WC1R 4BA

The Royal Jubilee Trusts
(voluntary youth work to encourage potential of young people)
8 Bedford Row
London
WC1R 4BA

Many environmental organisations have information packs which can be used as background to projects in the grounds, including:

Tidy Britain Group
The Pier
Wigan
Lancs
WN3 4EX

Friends of the Earth
26-28 Underwood Street
London
N1 7JU

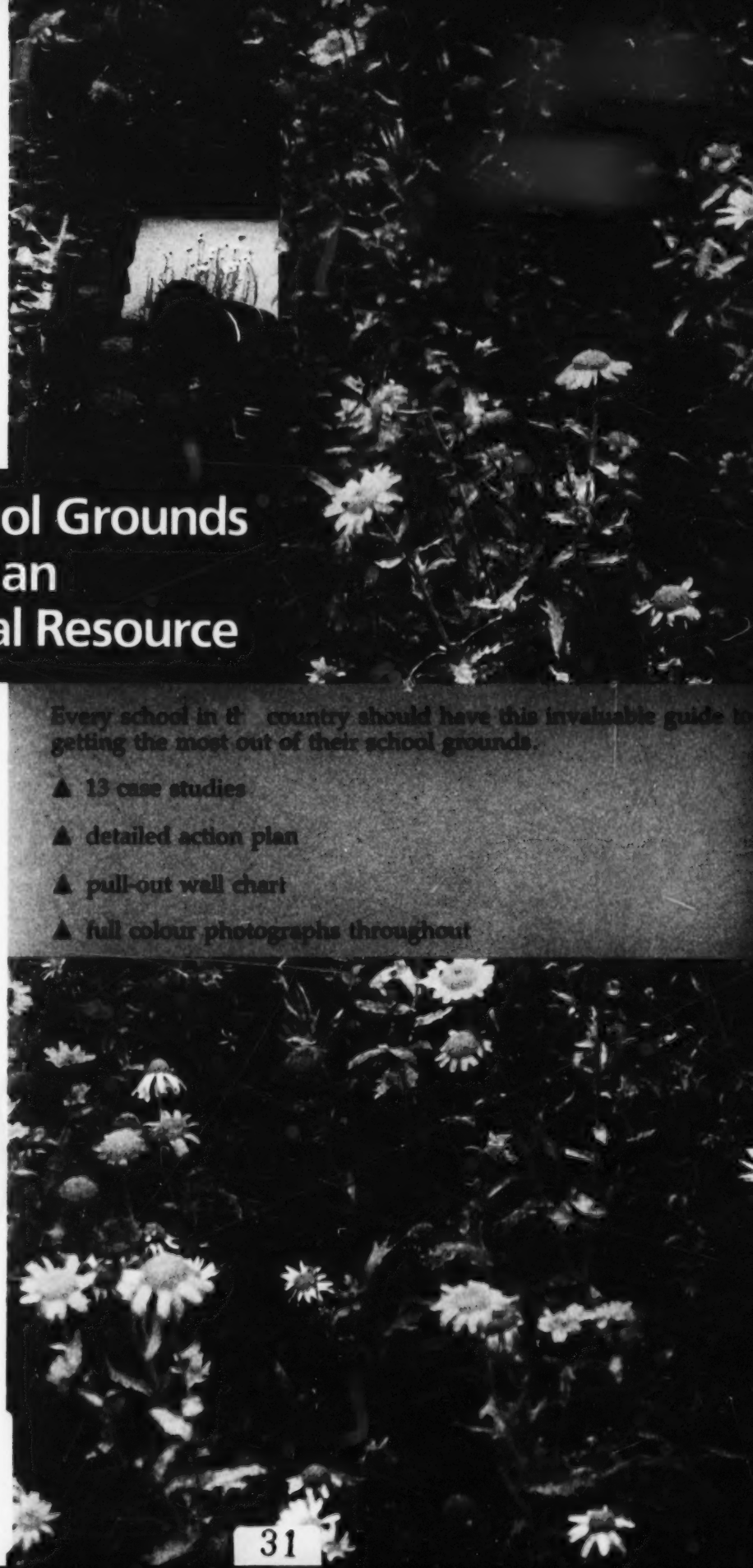
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
36 St Mary's Street
Wallingford
Oxford
OX10 0EU

Royal Society for Nature Conservation
The Green
Nettleham
Lincoln
LN2 2NR

RSPB
The Lodge
Sandy
Beds
SG19 2DL

World Wide Fund For Nature
Panda House
Weyside Park
Godalming
Surrey
GU7 1XR

Council for the Protection of Rural England
Warwick House
25 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 0PP



Using School Grounds as an Educational Resource

Every school in th country should have this invaluable guide t getting the most out of their school grounds.

- 13 case studies
- detailed action plan
- pull-out wall chart
- full colour photographs throughout

The Learning Through Landscapes Trust is supported by the World Wide Fund for Nature and supported by BP

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